



ALL OUR KIN

Testimony In Support of SB 291
“An Act Concerning Certain Protections for Group and Family Child Care Homes”
Submitted to the Housing Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly
By Jessica Sager, CEO of All Our Kin
March 10, 2022

Good afternoon Senator Lopes, Representative Phipps, Ranking Members Cicarella and Polletta, and distinguished members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Jessica Sager. I am the Co-founder and CEO of All Our Kin. Based in New Haven, we support more than 600 family child care providers who have the capacity to care for 3,600 children in New Haven, Bridgeport, Stamford, Norwalk, Danbury, Hartford and the surrounding areas. Beyond Connecticut's borders, we work with family child care providers and organizations that support them in 21 states and local communities across the country.

Today you will hear directly from a number of family child care providers. Their stories and the stories of many others we have had the honor of working with over the past two decades describe the problem that RB 291 proposes to solve. I am here to ask you to support RB 291 on behalf of them and the families in their communities. While I do so in my professional capacity, this issue resonates with me in a very personal way.

When my daughter Sophia was born, All Our Kin had a very small staff, and I needed to be able to go back to work as quickly as I could. Because I had a wonderful child care provider, I never doubted that my child was loved, that she was happy, or that she was safe. Every day, I could go to work, doing my job to build an organization that would support family child care educators across Connecticut and now across the country. Every working parent deserves that feeling of security and support. Every working parent needs access to quality care.

Today there are 300,000 fewer people in Connecticut's workforce than there were at the beginning of pandemic. Women's participation in the workforce is at a low ebb: nationwide it is lowest in more than three decades. Sixty-eight percent of those who have lost jobs and 100 percent of those who left jobs in the past two years are women.

If you have young children or grandchildren, or friends and co-workers with children, if you read the newspapers or listen to our state's largest employers, you know the child care shortage undergirds our state's workforce crisis. Without safe, reliable child care, women cannot

maintain regular employment. Employers note that women are turning down jobs, “downshifting,” moving from full to part-time employment, and simply not returning to the workforce without child care.

This increases women’s financial insecurity in the short- and long-term. When women leave the workforce it indelibly alters their employment trajectories. They don’t receive promotions, raises, and accrue savings at the same pace as men.

Before the pandemic, this resulted in a lifetime wage gap between all Connecticut women and men of about a half million dollars (\$425,000-\$549,000). But for Black women, the lifetime wage gap increases to \$1 million to \$1.5 million, and among Latinas it is more than \$2 million - among the largest in the country. The consequences to women and families can be tragic. The consequences for the state are no less severe: they add up to millions of dollars of lost revenue and greater public expenditures to help meet basic needs, including food, housing and health care.

The pandemic did not create Connecticut’s child care shortage, but has clearly exacerbated it. Before the pandemic, 44% of the state’s residents lived in a child care desert, where there is less than one licensed child care slot for three or more children. The child care shortage is most pronounced in rural and urban areas and among families with infants and toddlers.

Connecticut’s child care sector is focused on preserving existing child care capacity, replacing lost capacity, and meeting the demand for new infant-toddler slots. Families often prefer to enroll infants and toddlers in home-based child care. As you see in Commissioner Bye’s written testimony, OEC envisions family child care providers meeting up to half of the unmet need for infant-toddler slots. But barriers to housing and zoning are stifling the family child care supply.

I hope you will enable family child care providers to provide the options for working women that I benefited from as a young mother. I hope you will enable providers to continue to support their own families as small business owners. Your vote for RB 291 is a vote in favor of working mothers, family child care providers, and our communities. I urge you to support this important bill.